

## Easter Holidays in Crete.

Courier des Etats Unis.

For the Cretans, as for all Christians, Easter is the greatest religious festival of the year. It is also a joyous festival, for it fills stomachs famished by a fast of forty-eight days. During that period he who desires to follow the rules of the Church strictly must abstain not only from meat, but also from milk, eggs and fish, and must content himself with bread, olives and vegetables.

At present it is true that people generally do not fast so long, especially in the cities, where, instead of observing eight weeks of Lent, they fast only the first and last week. But in Crete they adhere, practically everywhere, to the observance of the whole fast. It is therefore very natural that the Cretans should long for the feast of Easter, which not only elevates their souls, but, in addition, permits them to strengthen their bodies, after long abstinence, by healthful and agreeable nourishment.

According to the custom of the country, roast lamb is the first dish with which the fast is broken. That is why throughout Holy Week the towns and villages resound with plaintive bleats and the tinkling of bells that hang from the necks of the white victims coming from the mountains. Each father of a family is eager to buy a lamb. After the purchase of the animal the dyeing of the eggs and the preparation of the Easter loaves begin. The latter are round, and before being put into the oven are garnished with red eggs and sprinkled with sesame.

At last the long-wished-for Easter Saturday arrives. Everybody puts on his finest summer clothes, for spring comes early in these quarters. About the end of February a carpet of verdure, delightfully bordered with daisies, anemones, covers the island; the air is filled with dainty fragrant perfumes, a diaphanous light bathes in its white brilliancy the undulating hills and the distant mountains, while the glittering sea reflects the colors of the rainbow. At midnight everybody goes to church to hear mass and celebrate the resurrection of Christ. Men, women and children, each carrying a candle, enter the church, which is shrouded in a semi-darkness penetrated only by the scattered and feeble light of a few lamps, which add to the mysterious charm of the ceremony and to its impressive solemnity. It is the idea of death and grief that is expressed by this veil of darkness which is spread through the church. But what a stirring contrast is the sudden brightness that bursts from a thousand lights when the priest, passing his candle to his attendants, pronounces the formal words, "Christ is risen from the dead!"

It is life, then, that enters in great torrents of light, and it is joy that fills the hearts and illuminates the countenances. The moment is impatiently awaited by those remaining outside the building, who then fire off guns. Let the reader remain calm; it is simply a manifestation of glee. The Cretan knows no better way to express his joy. He greets with gunshots the return of a relative, the marriage of a brother or the arrival of a young married couple in town. Why should he not "make powder speak," with still greater ardor, to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord?

So it is a veritable battle fire that breaks out in front of the church and it continues until the end of the mass. The boys take part in this exercise with the vivacity characteristic of the Greek youth.

There are some who even discharge guns inside the church, and in order to make the detonation the louder they use wads of hemp. Not infrequently this juvenile exuberance causes more or less serious wounds.

After mass all go home, and for a week afterward "Good day" and "Good morning" gives way to the form "Christ is risen!" As they say this friends and acquaintances kiss each other.

The greater part of Sunday is devoted to the pleasures of the table. There are two meals, the first in the morning, the second at noon. The principal dish is always lamb. At the end of the dinner a large plate of red eggs is brought in, but not immediately eaten; the egg battle must first take place. Each one chooses an adversary and knocks his egg against his adversary's egg. Happy is he whose egg proves the stronger; he is the victor and has the right to eat both eggs. From time to time the pistols and guns are seized and shots are gaily fired out of the window. Of course this overflowing joy is not relished by passers-by. On Sunday afternoon the people go to church again to hear the gospel and to take part in the execution of Judas.

The scene of this spectacle is the public square. A straw man, fantastically dressed, and hung from a gibbet; represents the unfaithful disciple. His feet are first set on fire. His trousers are filled with fre crackers, and at each explosion he throws his legs into the air. The grotesque antics of the traitor are greeted with great outbursts of laughter. When at last the flame reaches Judas' long beard, and his head shrives up, the popular joy is at its highest pitch. Continuous laughter and frantic cries burst forth, while pistol shots resound till the last flame dies out.

On Monday the people are already calmed. The lamb has been eaten, the powder supply has been exhausted, Judas has been burned, and the Cretans indulge their softer passions. In the early morning city folk and villagers go to the country, mounted on asses and mules, which in this island take the place of railroads and carriages. Generally three or four families unite for a picnic and load a mule with plenty of provisions for the day. The afternoon is given up to rural games and amusements, games of quoits are played, and jumping and running contests take place.

## Double Stars.

M. Camille Flammarion, in the "Bulletin de la Société Astronomique de France."

So far there have been discovered about 115,000 double stars, of which the orbits of but twenty-five have been calculated. The length of these orbits varies greatly. One of them takes but a little more than five of our years to complete its sidereal revolution. From this the orbits run up to nearly two centuries. There is in the constellation Andromeda, however, a star visible to the naked eye which the smallest telescopes show to be double. Seen through a powerful instrument, it is found to be triple. One of these stars turns around another in fifty-four years, and these two turn about the third. This last revolution it has as yet been impossible to calculate, but if it proceeds at the same rate at which it has gone on since 1777, when the third star was observed for the first time, the revolution must extend to 360 centuries!

It would be a mistake to classify all double stars under one head and to consider them as a separate class of heavenly bodies. They are of various kinds. Some are two stars of the same mass, the same light, the same temperature, the same relative age, as, for instance, the star in Virgo, which has been described, and most of the stars whose orbits have been calculated. Others show us an enormous sun, around which gravitates a much smaller star, as, for instance, Sirius. In other cases we have a sun with an obscure star, the existence of which is known only by its eclipsing its companion, thus making the latter a variable star.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of the double stars is the admirable colors which a number of them disclose through the telescope. It is next to impossible to give any idea of the beauty of these colors by any process of painting. To do that you would have to dip your brush in the rainbow and have for a canvas the celestial azure itself. It is to be remarked that the stars whose orbits are smallest do not present the same fine complementary colors as those whose orbits are longer. In general, both of the stars of which make the most rapid revolution are yellow. Astronomers have inferred that in the systems with pale and analogous colors, the masses are the strongest. These have, as a general thing, a light of the same order as that of our sun. In the star in Andromeda to which allusion has been made as being resolved by the most powerful telescopes into three stars, one of these is orange, another green, while the third is blue. What a splendid jewel in the celestial universe, an orange, emerald and sapphire diamond! Another very beautiful colored double star is in the constellation Cygnus or the Swan, a star which the smallest instruments show to be double. The colors here are a golden yellow and lucid sapphire.

If the worlds of Mars, Venus, Jupiter, or Saturn differ so considerably from the world we inhabit, although they are enlightened and fertilized by the same sun, how much more must these distant worlds in the depths of the sky differ from anything with which we are acquainted? In regard to these we can repeat, with even more truth than in any other case, the words of Shakespeare: "There are more things in heaven and Than are dreamed of in your philosophy."

SPANISH PRIDE.—Spanish pride is proverbial. An incident in the life of Lord Cochrane, the Earl of Dundonald, is illustrative, says an English paper. Lord Cochrane, in command of a little brig, the *Speedy*, in broad daylight, captured the Spanish frigate, the *Gamo*. The *Speedy* carried a crew of fifty men and threw a broadside of 28 pounds of metal; the *Gamo* a crew of 300 men and a broadside of over 100 pounds. The *Speedy* had previously, through a ruse, escaped from a large Spanish ship in the night, and some of her officers rather criticized the action of her captain on the occasion—in that he did not make an effort to capture the Spaniard. So when the enemy came up he hoisted to, as it about to surrender. Suddenly a puff of wind carried him alongside. He grappled and boarded. The *Speedy* lay low her opponents were unable to depress their guns sufficient to hit her, while the Englishman made every shot tell. The boarders, after stout opposition, carried the enemy. When the action was over the Spanish captain requested some certificate from Dundonald as to the way in which he had fought the ship. He received one: "This is to certify that Captain—, of the Spanish frigate *Gamo*, fought his issue like a true Spaniard!" The defeated gentleman was greatly pleased, and so was the nation, for on returning home he was immediately given another and more important command.

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